



Visibility Podcast



Me and my friends episode transcript

Fiona

Hi everyone. And thanks for listening to Visibility, the monthly podcast produced by CID, the Council for Intellectual Disability.

Fiona

Here, we will be telling our stories, and exploring some of the issues that impact people with intellectual disability. To find out more about our work visit www.cid.org.au.

Now, settle in and enjoy.

Music

[CID's podcast tune]

Adele

In the spirit of reconciliation, the Council for Intellectual Disability acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of country throughout Australia and their connections to land, sea and community. We pay our respects to their elders past and present and extend that respect to all aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples today.

Adele

Hi, I'm Adele and you're listening to visibility today. In the last episode of our relationship series we'll be discussing friendships from the perspective of two people with intellectual disabilities; Sarah and Justen. To begin with I've got Sarah with me. Sarah welcome to the podcast today. How are you?



Visibility Podcast



Sarah

Hi Adele. I'm good it's great to be here today

Adele

It is really wonderful to have a chat with you and talk with you about friendships because friendships it's just such an interesting subject, isn't it?

Sarah

Yes, friendships is everything from informal supports to formal supports. And people you can meet anywhere, network and you can enjoy yourself, socialize with and have networks of people so you don't feel lonely. Especially in this hard time that we've been in where everyone's been doing everything online.

That you have hardly been able to catch up with people as regularly as what you would have done before.

Adele

So, Sarah did you go to a school that had kids of all abilities? Was it a mixed school or did you go to a school where there was some segregation where you put in a special unit as they used to be called?

Sarah

I was in a support unit at Balcombe Hills High School where we were able to go into class with support but you didn't have someone help you all of the years at school.

It was in primary school. It was just all one school. There was no separate classes or one section for people with disabilities and one for mainstream.



Visibility Podcast



Adele

So you were with all the other kids that were the same age as you sometimes at the school and then sometimes you're in the special unit.

Was it trickier for you to make friends?

Sarah

It was tricky to make friends. Most of them were there were people with disabilities in the support unit and they were around the same age and I tried to keep most of my friends from when I left school. But then over time of course they started getting busy. They weren't able to meet up as regularly to what they were and since then I haven't seen them for so long. And every time I try and get together with them they just can't seem to come up with a date to catch up and see how everybody's going.

Adele

Sounds like you make a lot of effort with your friendships. That you continue to try and contact people so that you can have those relationships

Sarah

Yes yeah I do but the question is where do you find them, how do you get those people to be friends that you maintain those friends for a long time.

They get to know you, you get to know them and be able to have those regular conversations where you can catch up and see him and see how they're going and not just talk to them for three, four years or however long.

Adele

Perhaps we don't realize how much of a big deal someone just sitting and listening to you for half an hour. How much that can make a big difference to your day, can't it?

And it can make you feel just a bit better in the world.



Visibility Podcast



Sarah

Yes it can.

Adele

Do you have many friends without an intellectual disability?

Sarah

No, not a lot of them. Most of them are people with disabilities. One over in Glasgow who has a learning disability similar to intellectual. We've been talking quite regularly. Sometimes he's forgotten or he not sure if we've caught up but he'll always reschedule or invite me to date, some dates for online for disco nights or learning disabilities week. So it is sometimes about being organized and dedicated as a friend.

Adele

Yeah. It is it sounds to me like you make a lot of your friendships through your work and that you go to actual organizations. You go to these places that are already inclusive but what about the rest of society?

Sarah

You don't know with other groups what they're going to be like towards you and whether they take advantage of you being a person with a disability and how much they know.

Adele

Do you think that that's about your intellectual disability or is that about the world might know that you have a disability so in which case you've always been told you're a bit vulnerable?



Visibility Podcast



Sarah

The intellectual disability, that you're also female and that you've been cast as being vulnerable from a kid. I still feel vulnerable as an adult, but I think it's what other people put on me as well.

Adele

Do you think that also might affect your friendships that people might think that you're vulnerable and that maybe you wouldn't be a good adult friend because you're put into this other like cast?

Sarah

Yeah. I think that maybe that's what the friends are thinking, and the others are thinking.

Adele

What would you say to somebody who's never met a person with intellectual disability before but that would like a friendship.

Sarah

Never give up. Always try talk to the person and find out more about them. Get to know them and you'll be able to enjoy things together and do things that both of you are interested in doing and you won't feel so socially isolated, disconnected and won't have to be going around ringing up looking for people that can help you to make friends.



Visibility Podcast



Adele

Thank you, Sarah. I'm hearing from you that you make lots of effort with your friends. That you try to keep people engaged and get dates together and stuff. So I wonder if it's about all of us putting in just a little bit more effort to get to know each other and have those gatherings and have those dates and make sure that we all spend time together.

Sarah

Yeah, yeah but it's everybody putting in that time and effort to arrange dates to catch up.

Adele

Yeah, exactly and I think that a lot of what you're talking about is sometimes just respect, isn't it?

Sarah

Yeah, it's respect.

Adele

Sarah thank you so much for your time.

We really appreciate you sharing your stories with us and may you have more friends and more hugs in the future.

Sarah

Yes, thank you Adele it's been great to be here.



Visibility Podcast



Adele

We're now going to have a short break and we'll be back with Justin to chat about his experiences of forming and maintaining friendships as a person with intellectual disability.

Music

[CID's podcast tune]

Fiona

You're listening to Visibility the podcast produced by the Council for Intellectual Disability. If you're enjoying this episode, you can support us by viewing us through apple podcaster or your favorite listening app

Adele

Welcome back everybody you're listening to Visibility the Council for Intellectual Disabilities monthly podcast.

Today we're talking about friendships from the perspective of people with intellectual disabilities and now joining us is Justin we're going to talk with you about friendships today and we've with Sarah and she's given us some lovely insight into better ways that we can all connect regardless of our abilities, and it's really great to chat with you today. So, you're a man who lives with an intellectual disability.

How do you feel that that's affected your ability to make friends over the years?

Justin

Well, when I was younger it was pretty a big concern from the age 11 I wanted to make friends and hang out friends and that but I struggled right through until I started going to jail and I learned they're not my real friends because people lead me into do stupid



Visibility Podcast

things to get me in jail and that saying I stopped associating with a lot of people and me being kind hard I like to have friends and communicate and that.

Adele

When we chatted to Sarah she spoke about the difficulties in school and primary school and being in an educational unit and being separate from the other kids sometimes and that that was a bit tricky.

Did you have that sort of experience at school Justin?

Justin

When I was separating, I was put in a special education class for people's disability with ID and I did have some would-be friends in the normal school and normal class made it hard I started off in the mainstream preschool and then after something happened to me 11 from now, I was diagnosed with ID and then I was putting later on was in an SC class because of brain development order and I remember before I went there I had friends I hang out with on weekends and that from when that happened to me in I started seeing less people hanging out with at recess.

Adele

And so Justin, when it comes to friends if you think of friends that you know are good friends now as an adult what do you think the most important thing is in a friendship?

Justin

I was realistic about my ideas, and I tell them reason why my ID is there, and I was straight honest with people as I got older. And the friends that weren't my friends at school are now my friends because they understand me more than what anyone else they ever did as kids because when they're younger and they're at primary school and that they're still growing up themselves so they'll have no understanding.



Visibility Podcast



Adele

Kids can be cruel as well because when we're children we're trying to learn about the world aren't we? And so, with that having that connection and having an understanding of one another is one of the most important things in friendship for you. So how did you reconnect with people do you use social media for your friendships Justin?

Justin

Back in the 80s and 90s we didn't have that such thing as Facebook or anything. I need that. I remember a lot of people's names and I just went to the so-called school high school reunion that was talked about on Facebook left a few messages going "Oh do you remember me? I'm just checking to see how you're doing these days?"

Adele

And did reaching out to like kids from school on Facebook as an adult? Did you find that you had then good connections that people were pretty positive?

Justin

Yeah. it's just talked about it

Adele

Can you tell me what you think some of the barriers are as a person who lives with intellectual disability? What can make it more difficult for you to make and maintain friendships?

Justin

I just want them to see me before making judgment. But you know like then they can do it every day, but they want to be my friend so be it but so far as an adult in my late teenage years I showed nothing but loyalty to friends and I'm just a normal human



Visibility Podcast



being. Just I treat people how I be treated back and they can see that and probably back then they probably wouldn't thought about that you know. However I treat them now I'm going to be treated back by anyway.

Adele

Are you staying with a friend there or do you have a good friendship or connection up there?

Justin

Yeah I got a mate here he's actually 76 his name's Kevin. I met him at the car races and didn't realize that we're going be friends in the long run but yeah that was five years ago or something and he notices I'm the only guy who rings and talks to him every day and this guy really likes to communicate because it's me. I used to be a big chatterbox.

Adele

So, you're talking about your friend Kevin. I mean he sounds like an influential friendship because you've been able to be up in Queensland when you've needed to and spend time with him there and you met at the races so you have lots in common. But you've been friends for five years what do you think is like the main ingredient for your friendship?

Justin

Well basically also he's learned how to trust me to take care of him at his best interest he's learnt it over the years.

Adele

And so Justin you're saying that one of the best parts about your enduring



Visibility Podcast



friendship with Kevin is that he understands that that you that you will take care of him as a person and that he would do the same for you and there's a trust that you built over the years.

Justin

And that was me I still ring all my mates and check on them see how they're doing you know especially around this time you know. I still call my mates in Sydney and check to see what they're doing and see if they're doing all right because it's not easy at this time of the year. It's about trust and being honest and being accountable if something happens to him then you know I've got to help him yet.

Adele

And do you feel like that doing the checking in can be the backbone of a friendship. That it's just about like calling someone and making sure they're okay and having a little chat.

Justin

I've caught Kevin out a few times in time need where he needed someone to talk to and I'm there like I'd sit there for hours and like.

Adele

That a good friend isn't it a friend who will listen to you for hours.

Justin

I rang Carlos last night and I'll spend three to four hours and "Yeah you're right mate you're in Sydney you're in lockdown yeah that you're doing all right you hang in there."



Visibility Podcast



Adele

The checking in and having a laugh is always helps to make you feel less alone in the world doesn't it? The friends that that you kept around, what it that you felt was like look "I can trust you, you're a good friend". What were some of the ingredients to those friendships that meant that they've been enduring for you?

Justin

Ones that aren't usually after any benefits from me they're quite common.

There's something in common and I think they want their fair share.

message you say having just being at the same level as them.

Adele

Yeah. so it's about feeling like you've got a connection and stuff in common and that you're at the same level.

Justin

Yeah.

Adele

So, in which case do you think that um you've had a tendency to hold on to some friendships even if they're toxic just to have the have company sometimes?

Justin

I've only learned to get rid of toxic friends is because I know they end up letting me go to jail anyway and the real friends they wouldn't be doing that anyway.



Visibility Podcast



Adele

Do you find it that people like make a judgment and maybe that's a barrier?

Justin

I'll pick up on that one straight away because I'm very smart at that these days. I know how they can pick up the mat and usually when it happens I end up just walking away from them.

Adele

Yeah so you find that if people are making a judgment.

Justin

Waste of breath.

Adele

It's a waste of breath. Yeah so friendship to you is about trust and about being able to rely upon one another and having common ground.

Justin

It's not always about me but what I want but you want too.

Make sure that person is fine as well that you know what they know anything that's the way it should be.



Visibility Podcast

Adele

Yeah, definitely. And so what would you say Justin to anyone out there who thinks “Oh gee I’ve never met someone with an intellectual disability, I don’t think I’d be able to be friends with them”. What would be what would you say is like an act of friendship yourself what, would you say?

Justin

When people say that you know that's your problem but I'm not looking at you like that. You know if you've got an issue, you've got to put that aside.

Adele

Justin thank you so much for your time today and chatting with us about friendships I really appreciate your insights and I hope that you're staying safe up in Queensland.

Justin

I hope you're staying safe down there.

[Laughter]

Adele

And thank you to all of our listeners as well that was the last episode in our relationship series next month we'll be starting a series on COVID so please join us then until then stay safe and take care.

Fiona

You can support our podcast by leaving a review the apple or your listening app of choice until next month.